



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE PAM QUEEN**  
**HB 1152 – Public Schools – Student Meal Programs and Policies**  
**SUPPORT**

Greetings Chair Anne Kaiser, Vice-Chair Alonzo Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

This bill will prohibit a practice of “meal shaming” at Maryland public schools by establishing meal programs and policies that limit a stigma to children associated with meal debt.

With the passage of HB 1152, public schools would be prohibited from taking punitive actions against students with unpaid meal debt. For example, the school would be prohibited from excluding a child from extracurricular activities because of meal debt, or requiring them to wear wristbands or other identification of meal debt. The bill would also prohibit public schools from directly communicating with a student about his or her unpaid meal debt, and communicate only to parents. The bill further outlines policies to allow parents or guardians to apply for free and reduced meal programs throughout the school year; and assist parents or guardians with understanding the application process and eligibility requirements.

Why is this bill needs, according to the Maryland Hunger Solutions, Fall 2019 report, Maryland jurisdictions have different policy on how to handle students who have accumulated meal debt from no policy to policies which stigmatize students. Per Maryland Hunger Solutions, “by enacting effective meal charge policies, school districts in Maryland can ensure that the cafeteria is a positive and supportive environment for all students, and that the children of Maryland receive the nutritional support they need with the compassion and dignity they deserve.”. HB 1152, accomplishes this goal.

I seek a favorable recommendation for this important legislation.